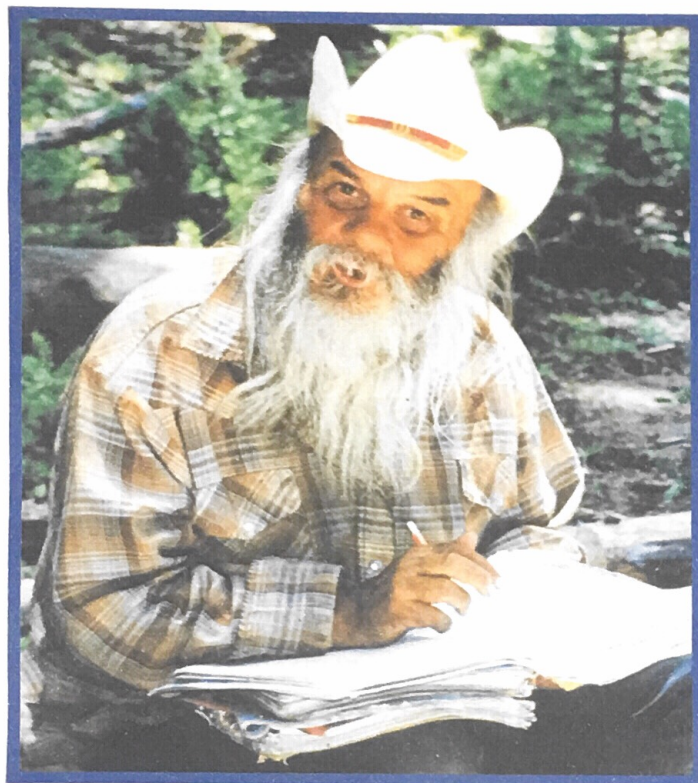




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.*

*Scanned in 2018.
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05.0 TIPI BOB - "I Always Come Back
to Rainbow"

[At the 1979 Gathering, there was a gay council, and at the 1980 gathering a gay party. Some Rainbow people helped prepare a gay gathering in Fall, 1981. In 1983 there was a gay group in the Pageant of Families at the Michigan Gathering, and a group of gay street people had a camp they called Fairy Circle at the 1984 California Gathering.

Tipi Bob does not identify with these group activities. He is an open homosexual who rejects the gay subculture for himself.]

TIP! BOB I was born in Baltimore in 1945. My father is a school teacher, born in Hungary. My mother is a baby machine - a housewife. She's a strict Catholic. I have six brothers and sisters. My father and mother went at it like cats and dogs. My mother took it out on me, and I took it out on my little brothers and sisters and they took it out on me.

My mother made me go to Catholic school. My father wanted me to go to public school. They had a lot of fights about it. I went to five years of Catholic school. They had a sister Eudoxia. We all called her You Dose Her. She was an ugly old twitch, ugly as sin. Every day, first thing in the morning, catechism - all that bullshit. Memorize enough to pass the test and then forget it. If their religion was as good as they say it is, they would have to hide it - everybody would steal it. Instead they try to ram it down everybody's throat.

When I reached puberty, I had these really weird feelings. It seemed to have a really visible effect. It wasn't a physical voice - just feelings. I tried to kill myself several times.

My father was smart enough to take me out of Catholic school. I honor him for that. The public school I went to were free people in a suburb of Baltimore. Junior high was hell, but high school was great. But it's funny how all the ass holes got elected to student offices every year. The people who were really qualified never got anything. If you had rich enough parents, they could pay for your campaign. I got a letter from my high school for a ten-year reunion in 1973. I wrote back, "I'm a hippie in Haight-Ashbury and

at the postage stamp, it's soaked in LSD. I never got a reply from them.

I went in the Air Force in a recruiting station in Hawaii first. It was better than Vietnam. I liked Nevada best. We were stationed near Las Vegas. We partied all the time. Our sergeant treated us like a father. Our captain was gay. Me and him would get down and cry together. He used to go around all the young troopers and they were scared of him because he liked the boys. I felt sorry for him.

After I got out, in 1968, I went to Greenwich Village. That's when everything was afraid. The Village was a sanctuary for hippies. The cops didn't bother you. We'd go in Central Park and have a gathering like the Rainbow Gathering every Sunday.

We got evicted from our building in the Village. It was 150 years old and the floors were sagging. The building was going to be condemned. I found a \$10 bill in my diary and bought a ticket to Woodstock, New York, to visit some friends. The next day, I found a job there building stone walls for Bob Dylan. I didn't know it was for him until two weeks later. I got a lot of gardening jobs in Woodstock after that.

Woodstock is right in the Catskills. The Catskills are massive mountains. A lot of people think the story about Rip Van Winkle missing for 20 years in the Catskills is true. He might have been taken by space people. You hear about people going off with the UFO's for what seems like two or three months and they haven't aged when they get back, but it's like 15 years later. Of course that story had been told two or three times before Washington Irving told it. There are still 150 foot pines in the Catskills. Back in Irving's time there were wolves and bears and cats. There are only two or three towns. They're not much bigger than in Irving's time. People have been moving out.

I went to the Woodstock Festival at Bethel, 60 miles from Woodstock, in 1969. It was the first Rainbow Gathering - chapter one. I was 25 before I went to bed with a man in Woodstock in 1970. That was my first sexual experience. That started a whole trip. I went to work gardening for a lawyer. Me and my friends set up a

tipi circle on his land in 1972. That's where I first met with the Rainbow Family. Barry and Garrick came by and passed out all these papers about the gathering in Colorado. I went there with my friends from Woodstock. We got there June 28 and went right through the blockade because some of us were medics. I wasn't a medic. I just lucked out.

The Granby Gathering was just one enormous party. People hollering - incredible. I went back to Woodstock and from there I went to California. I did the city trip in Berkeley and that's where I decided to go back to the woods. I couldn't get a job. The only job you can find in Berkeley is a blow job. Lots of cock and no lovers. I've never done the city trip again.

I went up to Rainbow Farm in Oregon. When I was there, Garrick was not there. There was a bunch from Los Angeles there and a bunch from Philadelphia. They were into a macho gun trip - just carrying around rifles, weird energy. Garrick finally kicked them out because they were fucking up the land - the spirits of the land, that is. I was stuck on Rainbow Farm while the 1973 Wyoming Gathering was going on. We all felt the Wyoming Gathering wouldn't happen, because Wyoming is such an uptight state. But it did happen.

I first tried peyote on Rainbow Farm. It was beautiful. They did the whole ceremony. There was a white guy who knew how to do it. I stayed there until July. Then I went and stayed on Mount Hood for about two months. I got a job fighting forest fires. They fed us like kings, too. Best food I've ever eaten. A lot of people didn't like it, but I was used to eating out of dumpsters. Then I went back to Baltimore. I was homesick. I wanted to see my folks. It was good to get back. I was tired. Then I went to Woodstock and stayed there until I visited my folks in the spring of '75.

My mother had a fight with me the spring of '75 because she saw me walking down the street with my shirt off one hot day. I get along better with my mother now, because my brother who was 13 was out with some other kids burning a cross. Some cops came by when they found out about it - plain clothes cops dressed like hippies. My father was drunk on T-Bird and my mother was watching television. The cops came in and beat up both of them when my father said, "You ain't no

cops. You're a bunch of fucking burns."

The cops handcuffed my brother and took him away. The case got thrown out of court, but it made my parents think. They were pro-Agnew people. They voted for Agnew. They thought I was a real radical. I said, "Well, Mom, I tried to tell you this for seven years."

Arkansas and Oregon were my most successful gatherings. In Arkansas I had two Indian guys for lovers and I traded for a lot of good things. I'm a lot more mature than I was in Arkansas. I was pretty upset from my fight with my mother and I couldn't stand this guy in Arkansas singing off key, and I lost my temper. You do mature after a while.

My first Indian lover was Sioux or Cheyenne—a beautiful guy. He came to Arkansas after the gathering during cleanup and wanted to be my lover. But he was a T-Bird wine Indian. He liked to party all night. I wanted to sleep. We never seen each other after that. Then there was this little boy in an Inca blanket with a lot of jewelry.

I wanted to go west. I liked the clean air there. I went to the Grand Canyon, then back to Woodstock. But there were getting too much idiots back there. Crazy people came through and hung out. Sort of like a Rainbow Gathering with all the mental cases. But a Rainbow Gathering goes on for five days. Woodstock goes on for three months with all the crazies that come from no one knows where—plus all the tourists. And there were a lot of hippie junk shops opening up selling obsolete trinkets no one else can use. And they're always outrageously expensive—like \$8 T-shirts. I suppose the underarms are pre-faded, sprayed with a concoction that smells like sweat. And jeans that really are machine faded for \$35 to \$50. Anything to look poor. It's the only place I know where you can buy garbage that somebody threw out for more than it originally cost—and it's labeled antiques.

I went back to Arizona for a couple of years and worked on a farm. I lived on the outskirts of the Navajo reservation. I got to know a lot of Navajos. Not many of them speak English, but some would interpret.

The Navajo language is very hard, like my father told me Hungarian is. I like the Navajos. They're a pretty wild people, but they always eat good food - fry bread and mutton. It sure fills you up. The Navajos live all around outside the reservation for miles. They live on worthless land where nobody will bother them. They like to live all scattered out - not clumped together like Hopis. They want elbow room so they can chop wood without worrying about waking up other people. I had them visit quite a bit. But when they take a drink of T-Bird, the best thing you can do is say, "Excuse me, I've got to take a piss," and step off in the bushes till they're sober.

In Spring '76, I went to the Desert House near Tucson for some peyote meetings. The first peyote meeting at the Desert House was pretty nice. The second was like a cross between the Catholic Church and the Mickey Mouse Club. This straight lady sang like a beer and crackers commercial and everybody puked. The third one, they had to call the cops. The cops came with pig planes - little Cessnas. It was awful. I dreamed about cactus thorns and street lights for a long time afterward.

I went to the Montana Gathering and the New Mexico Gathering. Just recently the asphalt machine came by my house and with it came the monsters - hordes of honkies who made clouds of dust that were always kept in motion by the devil winds that come from the south. I was thinking of leaving. But it taught me to endure. I would go off and spend the night in a beautiful spot in the woods and get back together.

Most of the Europeans in America are still in Europe. They isolate themselves from the surrounding world. They surround themselves with their materialistic possessions. They're completely unaware of what's going on. They hide themselves from the sun all day and only come out at night. Also the people I'm living with are totally scatterbrained. They ain't got their trip together. There's a girl with them who's trying to get them to get their trip together. She talks to them and they listen to a woman where they won't listen to me because I'm a man. They wanted to live off me, but I told them, "Sorry about that. I'm leaving." I had nowhere to go, so I came here to the Rainbow Gathering. As I always come back here.

I'm getting into bitching a lot-negative energy-now. I don't know why. Back at home, I had to pull on my face and put on my airline stewardess smile and not say how I felt. I haven't made out with a dude in five months. There's a lot of beautiful Navajo boys, but I don't know any who are homosexual. I'd still like Arizona for my anchor point. I feel I belong there.

The gathering seems more organized than it used to be. More spiritual power-good, happy, positive power. There's more security here in the Oregon Gathering. More food than there used to be at other gatherings. You don't have to scrounge any more. The Rainbow Gathering is like Christmas for me to see all my friends each year. It's nice to go see my people and hold them.

[Five years later at the Michigan Gathering in 1983, Tipi Bob told of the changes he had gone through since the Oregon Gathering.]

I went back to Arizona. I was accepted as an Apache Indian. But now, I want to abandon that state. In the next few years, it's gonna be a really heavy scene. I'm going back to Woodstock - some place that's more stable.

Indians don't last long. Say if you have ten white friends and you leave for two years, when you come back eight of them may still be there. If you have ten Indian friends, when you come back in two years, three of them are dead and all but one of the others are gone.

Now my brother-the only one I liked talking to-has moved away from Baltimore. I want to break all my attachments with the East Coast. It's either that or die in a nuclear fireball. If that don't happen, thank God. But I like to be safe.

A buddy said to me I had an anti-self trying to destroy me. It made me want to kill people. I thought it might be the Devil. I heard it stronger the further I was away from home. On the reservation, I heard it all the time. Then this friend of mine who had the same experience

pointed out what it was. It was my mother bitching at me all the time for years and years. She wants me to be talking about stocks and bonds and credentials and not about thunderstorms and sunsets. I learned to turn that voice off.

In the past three or four years, I've been improving dramatically. Of course Rainbow helped me. The gathering this year in Michigan was definitely the best. They were gonna put on a punk rock show in the parking lot, but it got rained out. Thank God. It would have been like a whore's house next to a church. Punk is anti-Christ energy. It makes me nervous that it's getting stronger every year. The government's propping it up.

A few nights ago at the gathering, I kept dreaming about the thunder - it sounded like Catskill thunder near Woodstock. It kept echoing. I think I'm coming to a fork in the road. I want to get back to working on the land. I want to be independent of the system - no more of food stamps and that bullshit. I want to be prepared - like if there's super-inflation, a dollar for a cup of coffee. If it doesn't happen, well, hallelujah. I want to eat and work and live - just be able to watch the sun go down and have a good thought running through my head.

But then I want to go to Hawaii. I don't want to have more of these cold winters. There's the boredom that goes with them. I'm gonna have to leave this country - go to the islands. I had a very intense dream about an island called Moorea near Tahiti. I was actually making love to someone and she said "Don't go away. Come back."

[At the Fall '83 Southwest Regional Gathering in the Gila Wilderness, Tipt Bob told me he had checked about Moorea and found he could only get a two-week visa and that Hawaii was much too expensive for him. He has moved back to the Woodstock, New York area.]